

PRESS RELEASE
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JIMMY LAI: MOUNTING CONCERNS AT FURTHER PROLONGED DELAY IN TRIAL

Concerns are mounting regarding the continued imprisonment and prosecution of 76-year-old publisher, writer and prominent pro-democracy campaigner, Jimmy Lai. Today, his son, Sebastien Lai, and the international legal team have expressed grave concern at the continuing situation and Mr Lai's plight, and have called for action to be taken to secure Mr Lai's speedy release.

Earlier today, Thursday 25th July 2024, the Hong Kong court dismissed the defence's mid-trial submission of no case to answer and adjourned the trial for four months until 20th November 2024, when Mr Lai is expected to give evidence. Mr Lai's trial for alleged sedition and alleged "collusion with foreign forces" contrary to the controversial and draconian Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong and Special Administrative Region ("NSL"), began on 18th December 2023. The trial has already faced serious delays. It was initially set to begin in 2022 but was repeatedly adjourned. It was originally estimated to last 80 days, but the prosecution case ran from 18th December 2023 until 11th June 2024. The mid-trial submissions could not be listed until 24th - 25th July due to restricted judicial availability.

Mr Lai, a British national who will turn 77 later this year, has been imprisoned in a maximum security Hong Kong prison, in solitary confinement, since December 2020.

Commenting today on the delay in the trial, **Sebastien Lai** said,

"My father is 76 and he has already spent over three and a half years in prison. At a time when most people get to enjoy their retirement and spend time with family, my father is in solitary confinement in a Hong Kong prison.

After repeated adjournments and long delays, my father's show trial under the National Security Law finally began in December 2023. Now we learn of a four month delay within the trial itself, so this unfair process drags on even longer. My father should not be in prison in the first place. I implore the UK Government to take action to end this farce and secure my father's immediate release."

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, who leads the international legal team for Jimmy Lai and for his son, Sebastien Lai, added,

"British national Jimmy Lai is 76 years of age and diabetic. He has already spent three and a half years in solitary confinement, which poses a serious risk to his health. And he should not be in prison in the first place. He has been imprisoned due to his work as a media owner, writer and pro-democracy campaigner; for running an independent

newspaper, Apple Daily, which had a robust pro-democracy and anti-corruption stance and stood up to China's leaders.

The authorities have done all they can to silence Jimmy Lai. They have introduced a draconian law to criminalise dissent. They have shut down his newspaper. They have subjected him to a barrage of spurious prosecutions. And his current trial has been beset by repeated delays. Enough is enough. The authorities in China and the Hong Kong SAR should release Jimmy Lai, before it is too late."

In international matters, Mr Jimmy Lai and Mr Sebastien Lai are represented by an international legal team led by **Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC**, which includes **Jonathan Price**, **Tatyana Eatwell**, **Jennifer Robinson**, and **Sarah Dobbie**, barristers at Doughty Street Chambers.